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International Relations Research Institute
School of International Relations
University of Southern California
September 1976

FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THREAT LEVELS IN THE
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM
TR&A Technical Report #35
Threat Recognition and Analysis Project

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER TR&A Technical Report #35	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER TR&A-TR-35
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THREAT LEVELS IN THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED 7-1-75 to 9-30-76
7. AUTHOR(s) 10 Jeffrey Simon		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER #35
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Department of International Relations University of Southern California University Park, Los Angeles, CA. 90007		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) ARPA # 2518 N00014-76-C-0137
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Organizational Effectiveness Research Office of Naval Research (Code 452) 800 N. Quincy St., Arlington, VA. 22217		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR 170/773
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) Office of Naval Research Branch Office 1030 East Green Street Pasadena, California 91106		12. REPORT DATE September 1976
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 17 (12) 19
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) "Approved for public release; distribution unlimited."		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) "Approved for public release; distribution unlimited."		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Threat levels, threat situations, domestic system, international system, monitoring, tension, crisis, conflict.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) An analysis of threat situations in the domestic and international system is presented. The basis for analyzing domestic threats as a system phenomenon is explained. Data are reported for the severity, development, speed and spread of domestic and international threats over a four month period.		

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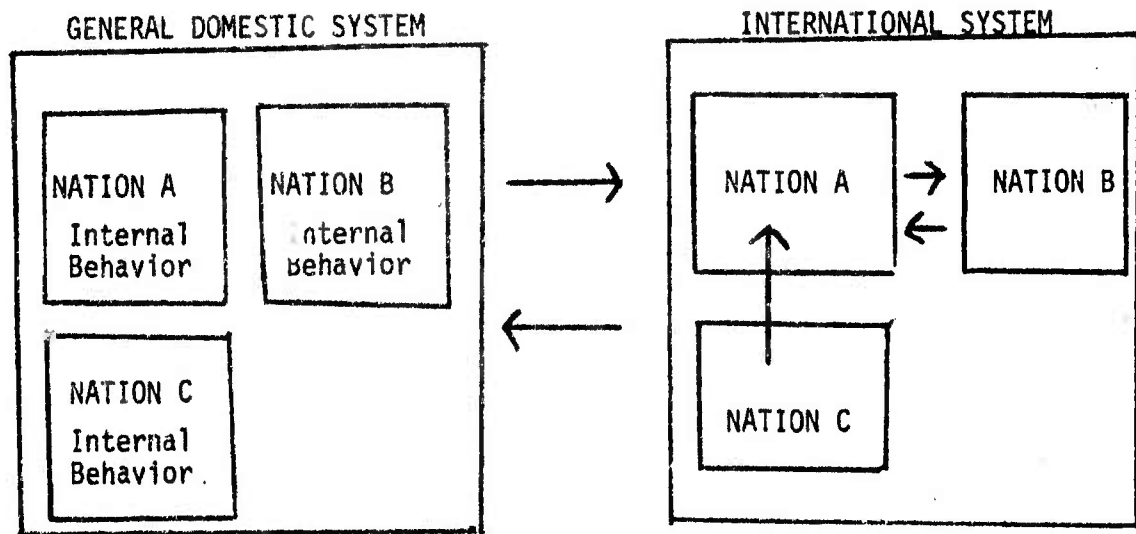
FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THREAT LEVELS IN THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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September 1976

The attempt to find linkages between domestic and international conflict behavior has been a major research task for a number of years. The findings have generally been that little or no relationship exists between domestic and international conflict. Rummel (1963) analyzed the relationship between domestic and foreign conflict behavior for seventy-seven nations between 1955 and 1957. Utilizing twenty-two measures of foreign and domestic conflict behavior (such as number of assassinations, strikes and riots for domestic conflict, and wars, troop movements and anti-foreign demonstrations for international conflict), his main finding was that the two dimensions of conflict behavior were unrelated. In a replication of Rummel's research, Tanter (1966) found similar results for the 1958 to 1960 period. He discovered only a small relationship between domestic and foreign conflict behavior that increases with a time lag.

The unit of analysis in the above studies was the nation state. The attempt was to link a nation's domestic attributes or its internal strife with its behavior in the international system. A more interesting question appears to be to what extent is there a relationship between the conflict and tension level in the international system and the conflict and tension level in the domestic system. A shift in analysis from the nation state to the international and domestic systems raises fascinating and interesting research possibilities. We are familiar with the existence of an international system which over the years has been given various names such as "bipolar", "multipolar" and even "bi-multipolar." (Rosecrance, 1969). However, while attention has focused on the existence of an international system, there has not yet been an attempt to conceptualize and analyze a general domestic system that might be affected by and itself affect the international system. Such a system is not the internal behavior of one specific nation state, or even a group of nation states, but rather the internal behavior of all states for a given period of time. The domestic system can be kept analytically separate from the international system. Thus, while the international system is characterized by all the various interactions between two or more nation-states (or non-governmental actors), the

general domestic system can be characterized by all the internal behavior of all nation states. The following diagram depicts the two systems:



As can be seen above, the domestic system is conceptualized as being exclusively the internal behavior of all nations without any penetration by external actors or spillover into the international system. The latter is conceptualized as the interaction between two or more nation states, or the penetration of a nation's domestic system by other nations. Thus in the above diagram, nation C is involved in the domestic system of nation A and this behavior thus becomes part of the international system. The two arrows between the general domestic system and the international system indicate that each system can be affecting the other. We are not establishing specific hypotheses at this point, since our main purpose is to indicate how one can monitor tension levels in both systems (to be explained below). A general hypothesis would be that when the tension level in the international system is very high, the tension level in the general domestic system should be low. The assumption here is that during serious international crises, the domestic turmoil of not only those nations involved in the crisis, but of all nations should be quiet. Domestic problems in all nations will temporarily subside as attention is focused on the serious international developments. Once the tension in the international system recedes, the tension level in the domestic systems of all states should increase.

In addition to shifting the level of analysis of

domestic and international conflict behavior from the nation state to the system level, there is also a need to move away from the concept of conflict and crisis. More fruitful analysis can be obtained by focusing on threat levels rather than on actual conflict and crises. As McClelland argues:

One approach to the explanation of international crises, not yet fully exploited, is to shift the main attention to a contributing concept. Theorists of crises may have been standing too close to their subject and, perhaps, they should retreat one step. By putting the prime focus on threat, they might arrive indirectly at a better understanding of crisis occurrences. A theory of threat, developed with an eye on crisis as an outcome, may be an advantageous approach to improved crisis theory. (1975:17)

Events are seen as leading to the recognition of threats which in turn might lead to crises. This paper will thus be an attempt to monitor and chart the flow of threats in the international and domestic system. Since it is an exploratory study, the conceptual scheme is kept at a simple level with the purpose being to indicate how one can discover trends and patterns in both systems.

THE FLOW OF THREATS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ARENA

The data we use were gathered by the Threat Recognition and Analysis Project. Three newspapers, THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE TIMES OF LONDON, and THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, were scanned every day for a four month period (January-April, 1976) for all items that indicated a threat situation. A group of coders would code each item according to actor identification, type of threat, severity (degree) of threat, anticipated development (tilt) of threat, movement/acceleration (speed) of threat, and potential spread of threat to involve more actors. There were four possible codes for type of threat; 1. domestic (national state/society location); 2. national location but spilling out to involve external/foreign parties; 3. international location (two or more national states in a threat relationship); 4. global (general condition with no specific geographical location). The degree, tilt, speed and spread of threat were based on four separate scales ranging from 1 to 9 with 1 representing low degree, improving situation, slow moving situation, and low potential for spread, while 9 represents high degree of threat, intensifying situation,

fast moving situation, and high potential for spread.

With this coding scheme it is possible to attempt a preliminary analysis of the behavior of the international and domestic threat systems. We operationalize the domestic system as all type 1 situations (national state/society location) and the international system as all type 2, 3, and 4 situations (national location but spilling out to involve external/foreign parties, international location, and global location). The domestic with spillover category is being combined with the international and global categories since the spillover category involves domestic events that have expanded into the international arena and have thus become a part of international politics. It thus makes intuitive sense to analyze all the exclusively domestic situations on the one hand, and all the international, global, and domestic with spillover situations on the other hand. We feel such a combination will adequately separate the domestic threat system from the international threat system.

In an earlier paper (McClelland, 1976), we analyzed the relationship between the domestic and international arenas in terms of degree of threat and the number of high threat situations (degree 6 and above). As was pointed out then, the overall degree level was obtained by multiplying the number of items for three coders combined in a given degree level by that level and summing the rows across. For example, suppose for a given seven day period the combined coders' scores for the degree level of all domestic situations were as follows:

DEGREE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
FREQUENCY	0	1	0	10	15	20	4	2	0

The above table indicates that for that given week there was one entry in the degree 2 category, ten in the degree 4 category, fifteen in the degree 5 category, etc. We thus obtained a total domestic threat degree score for that week by multiplying the degree by the frequency. In the above example we would do the following computations:

$$2 \times 1 + 4 \times 10 + 5 \times 15 + 6 \times 20 + 7 \times 4 + 8 \times 2 = 2 + 40 + 75 + 120 + 28 + 16 \\ = 281$$

Therefore, the domestic threat score for that week would be 281. The international threat score was computed in a similar manner. This procedure allowed us to chart the flow of the threat degree level for the domestic and

international arenas over the four month period. The basic finding was that there was generally an inverse relationship between the threat levels for the two systems. As the degree level of international threats increased, the degree level for domestic threats decreased, and as the threat level for the international system decreased, the threat level for the domestic system increased. We reproduce the four graphs in figures 1 through 4. As can be seen in figures 1 and 2, for most of the time period the number of serious international and domestic threat situations are inversely related. (Since we combined all coders' scores, we did not obtain the number of different situations in a given degree level, but rather the number of times domestic and international situations are classified in a certain threat degree level). The same general pattern emerged when we analyzed the degree level for the international and domestic system, as can be seen in figures 3 and 4. Although at times both the international and domestic threat degree levels increase or decrease together, the general trend is for one to increase as the other decreases.

In addition to the degree of threat level, we can compare the two systems in terms of the spread potential for threats. Figure 5 represents the comparison of threat spread in the international and domestic systems for seven day periods. The spread degree level was computed in the same manner as the degree level. As can be seen in figure 5, there is an inverse relationship between the international and domestic systems for the first several weeks. The international spread score increases from 104 to 792 during the first four weeks, while the domestic spread score decreases from 338 to 192 during this same period. The spread potential in the international system then sharply declines between weeks 4 and 5 (from 792 to 480). The decline in the international score corresponds with a steady increase in the domestic score from 192 in week 4 to 285 by week 7. The international arena, after the decline in week 5 experiences two consecutive increases as it moves from 480 to 710 to 909. The spread score then decreases between weeks 7 and 9 while the domestic score, after a slight decrease between weeks 7 and 8, experiences a steady increase until week 10 (from 251 to 455). This is followed by a general decline in the domestic spread between weeks 10 and 16, while the international spread score, despite a sharp decline in week 12, experiences a general increase between weeks 9 and 13. This is followed by small decreases until week 16. Between weeks 16 and 17, the international spread score sharply decreases from 907 to 613 while the domestic spread score increases from 311 to 415.

Thus it appears that the spread potential for the international and domestic systems are inversely related, although the trends in opposite directions do not always occur simultaneously. Thus, while we cannot, on the basis of this analysis, determine which system is reacting to the other, it appears that domestic threat situations are unlikely to spillover and spread into the international arena when the latter system is experiencing widening tension in terms of spreading situations. However, when international threat situations appear confined and not likely to spread to other nations, the internal threat situations become likely candidates for entry into the international arena.

When we analyzed the data for three day periods, (figure 6), we found that the inverse relationship occurs for the beginning of the time period. For the first 9 time intervals, both the domestic and international systems experience a series of increases and decreases, with the international spread score increasing overall from 229 to 459, while the domestic spread score decreases from 155 to 68. For the middle of the time period the inverse pattern does not appear. As the international spread increases between time intervals 11 and 17, the domestic spread remains generally at the same level. However, as the spread factor decreases in the international arena between intervals 17 and 20, the domestic system experiences a series of increases and decreases which result in a general increase between time intervals 17 and 24. While for the remainder of the time period the pattern is not very clear as both the international and domestic system experience sharp fluctuations, we can still isolate the inverse trends. Thus there is a general increase in the international spread score between time intervals 24 and 32, and a general decrease in the domestic spread score between intervals 24 and 36. The international spread then decreases between intervals 32 and 39 while the domestic spread increases between intervals 36 and 40. The international also begins an upswing during the final week of the data analysis. Thus while the pattern for the 3 day intervals is not as clear as in the 7 day intervals, the general finding is that for most of the time the potential for threat situations in the international system to further spread, and the potential for threat situations in the domestic system to spillover into the international arena, are negatively related.

When we analyzed the spread scores with the threat degree level (figures 7 and 8), we found that both the international and domestic arenas experienced the same trends. As the spread score increases so does the threat

degree level for each system, and as the spread score decreases, the threat degree level decreases. However, since the trends occur simultaneously, we cannot say that high spread scores lead to high threat scores or vice versa. Since the spread degree is based on the coders' perception of how likely the situation is to spread, it appears that when international or domestic tension is high, there is a tendency to perceive that the threat situation in each system will get worse and spread to involve other actors. Once the threat level decreases, the tendency is to perceive that the situation will not spread any further. This pattern repeats itself when we analyze the speed scores with the degree level, (figure 9 and 10) and the tilt scores with the degree level (figures 11 and 12). It thus appears that for both the domestic and international threat systems, the tendency is to perceive high threat situations as getting worse, moving fast, and spreading, while low threat situations are perceived as getting better, moving slow and not likely to spread.

When we compared the movement or speed of domestic and international threats for 7 day periods (figure 13) the inverse pattern appeared for the first five weeks. Between weeks 1 and 4 the speed of international threats increases from 832 to 1007, while the speed of domestic threats decreases from 759 to 384. The international speed then sharply decreases to 620 in week 5, while the domestic speed begins to steadily increase until week 7 when it reaches a score of 600. The international threat arena also speeds up between weeks 5 and 7. Then between weeks 7 and 9 the international system slows down while the domestic system, after a slowdown in week 8, increases its speed until week 10. Then as the speed of the international threats increases between weeks 9 and 11, the speed of domestic threats decreases between weeks 10 and 13. The international system slows down between weeks 11 and 12 while the domestic system speeds up between weeks 13 and 14. The international threat arena then increases its speed between weeks 12 and 13 while the domestic arena decreases its speed between weeks 14 and 16. The international system then decreases for the remainder of the time period while the final week for the domestic system is characterized by an increase in speed.

Thus while for the first few weeks the speed of developments in the international and domestic system followed an inverse pattern simultaneously, between weeks 8 and 17 the domestic system appears to be reacting to developments in the international system with a time lag of a few weeks. Thus beginning with week 7 for the international arena, and week 8 for the domestic arena, the

inverse pattern develops. As the speed of threats increases in the international arena, the domestic threat system slows down, while when the international threat system slows down the domestic system speeds up.

The 3 day analysis for speed (figure 14) indicates that the pattern holds for the first nine 3 day periods. During this time interval the international system increases from 296 to 576 while the domestic system decreases from 314 to 128. For the middle of the time period (intervals 11 to 24) both threat arenas experience an overall increase in speed. Then between intervals 24 and 30 the domestic system slows down as the international system, after a series of increases and decreases, experiences a general increase. Between intervals 30 and 31 the international system slows down while the domestic system speeds up. The domestic system then slows down between intervals 32 and 36 while the international system experiences a series of increases and decreases. The domestic system increases between intervals 36 and 39 while the international slows down between intervals 37 and 39. After converging at interval 39, both systems speed up for the final 3 day period. Thus it appears that for the most part the speed of threat developments in the international and domestic systems are inversely related.

We have thus found that on the whole, the degree, speed, and spread of threat situations in the international and domestic systems are inversely related. While we did not perform any statistical analysis, we nevertheless believe that we have discovered interesting and important patterns in both systems. The possibility that threat situations in the domestic systems of all states are sensitive to developments in the international system means that it might be possible to predict the development of internal strife on the basis of changes in international tension. Thus when international tension subsides, the "crisis" is not really over as a new series of threatening situations arise in the internal affairs of many nations. Further analysis should be aimed at determining what types of nations are most sensitive to the variations in the international threat system. More data needs to be collected on a regular basis so that the monitoring of threat levels in both systems can be kept up to date. Different coding schemes should also be developed aimed at improving the judging of threats. When such research is undertaken, we will be in a better position to predict and explain the level of threats in nation states.

FOOTNOTES

1 The speed score was computed in the same manner as the degree and spread score. For the tilt score, however, the 5 category was deleted and the sum of the 1 through 4 scores was subtracted from the sum of the 6 through 9 scores. We thus obtained a figure that represented deteriorating or improving situations.

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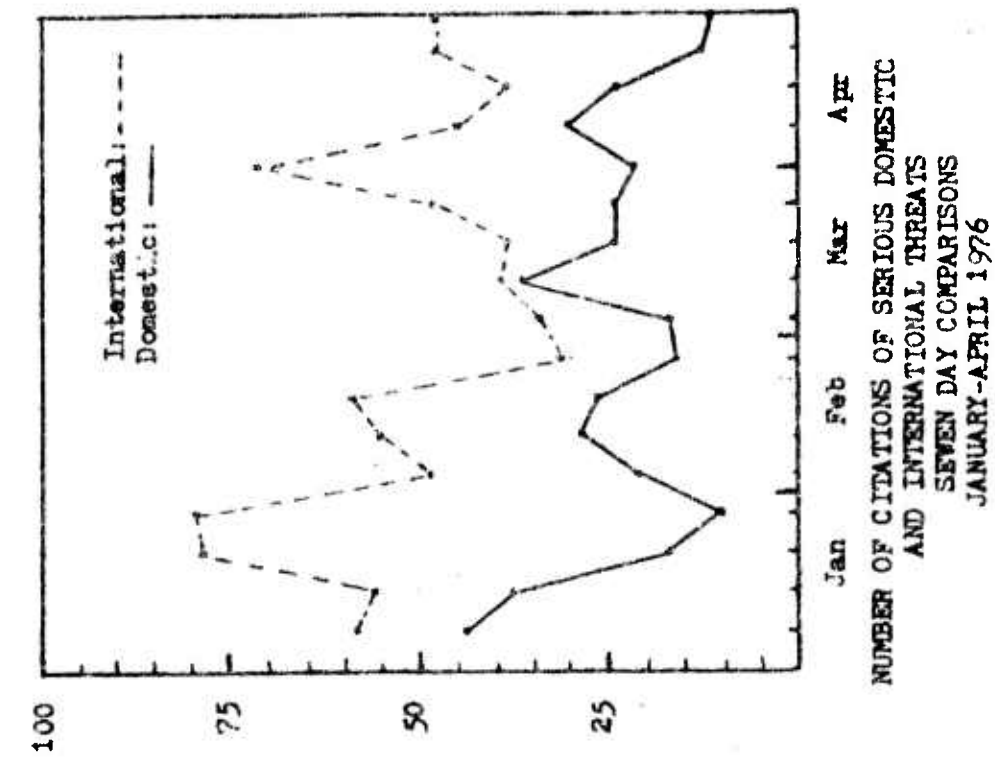


Figure 1

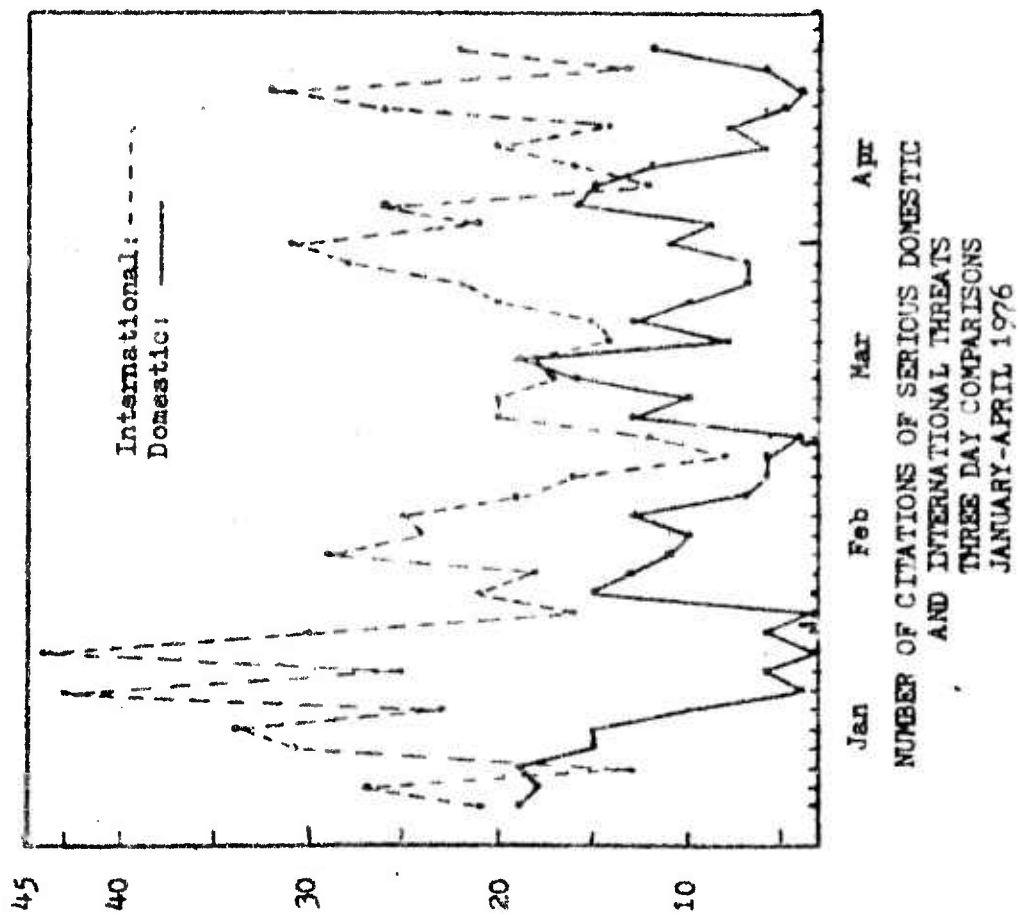


Figure 2

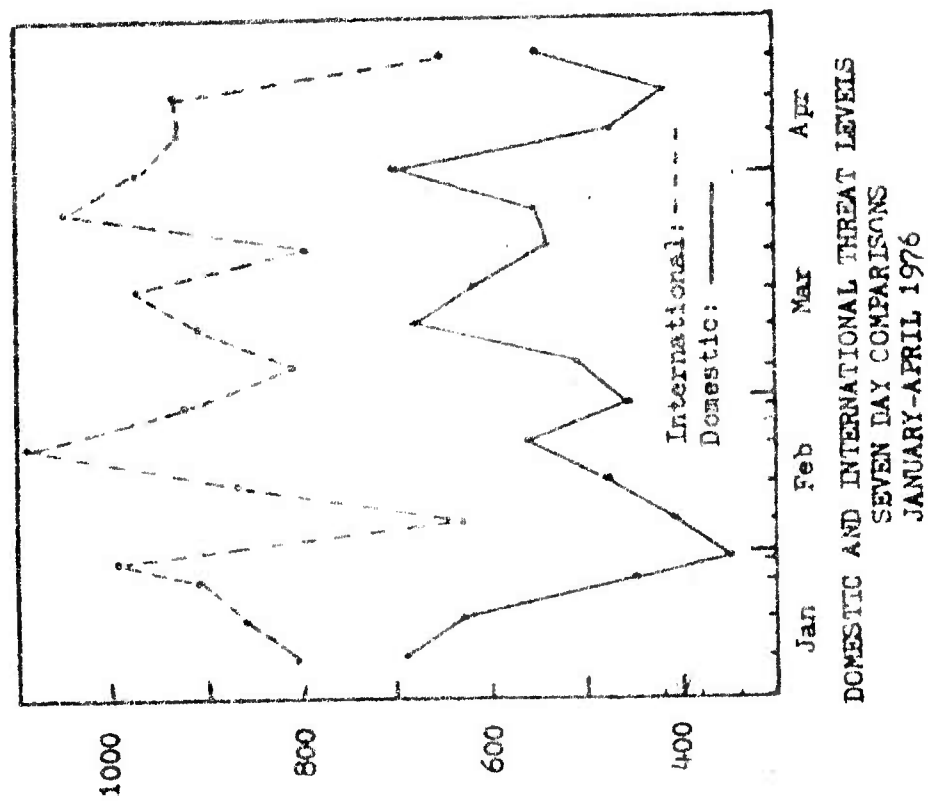


Figure 3

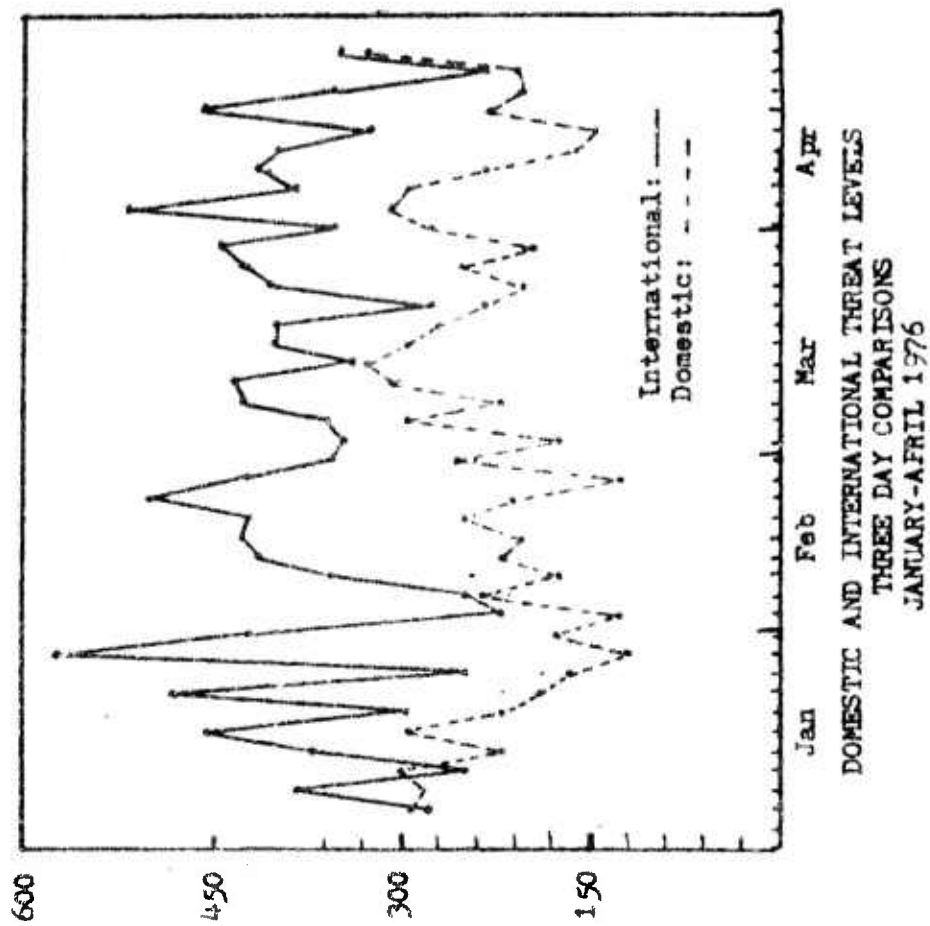
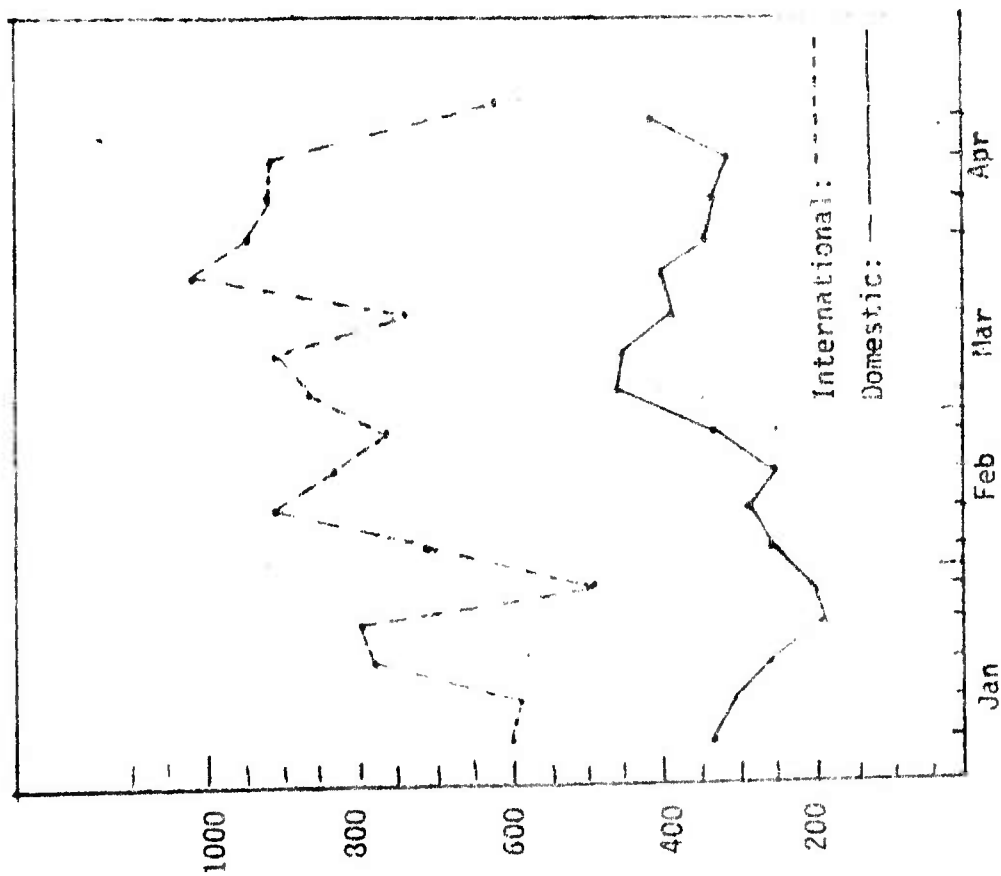
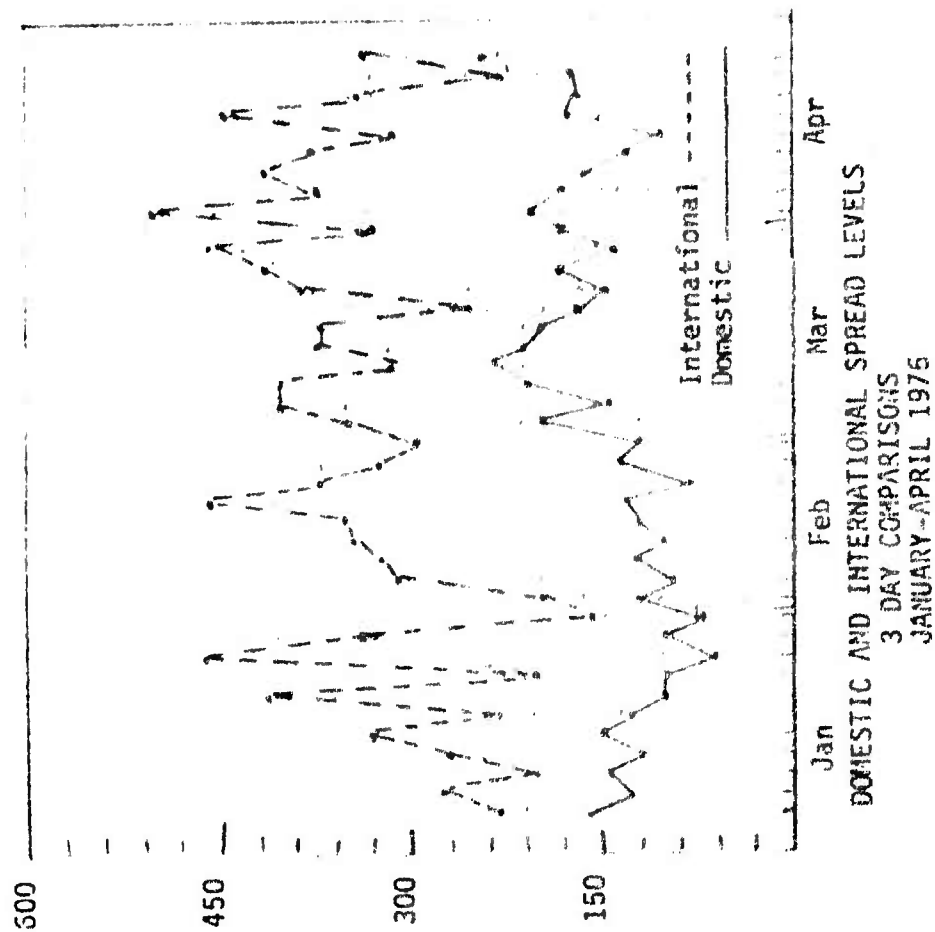


Figure 4



DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SPREAD LEVELS
WEEKLY COMPARISONS
JANUARY-APRIL 1976

Figure 5



DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SPREAD LEVELS
3 DAY COMPARISONS
JANUARY-APRIL 1976

Figure 6

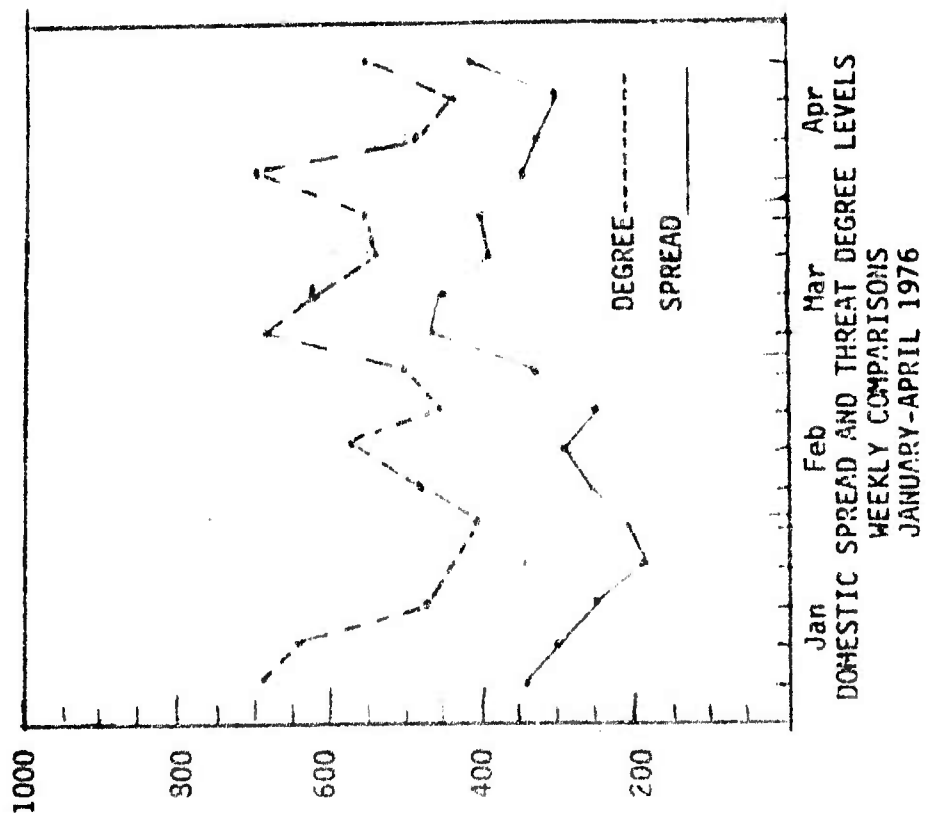


Figure 7

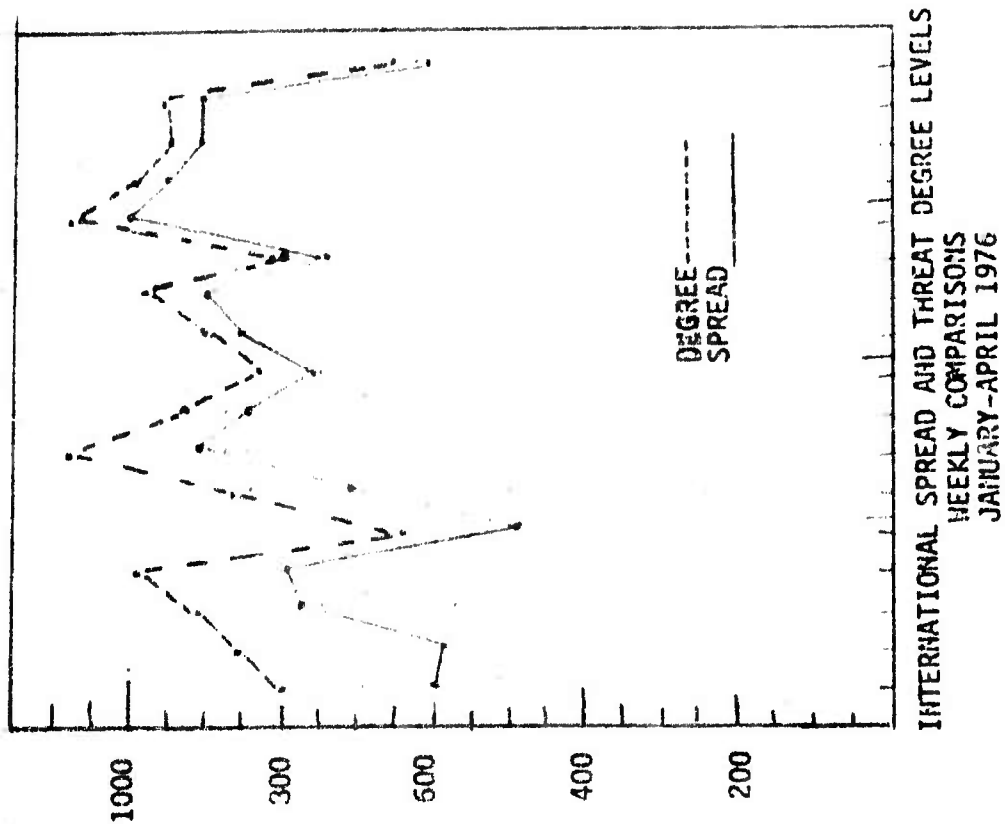


Figure 8

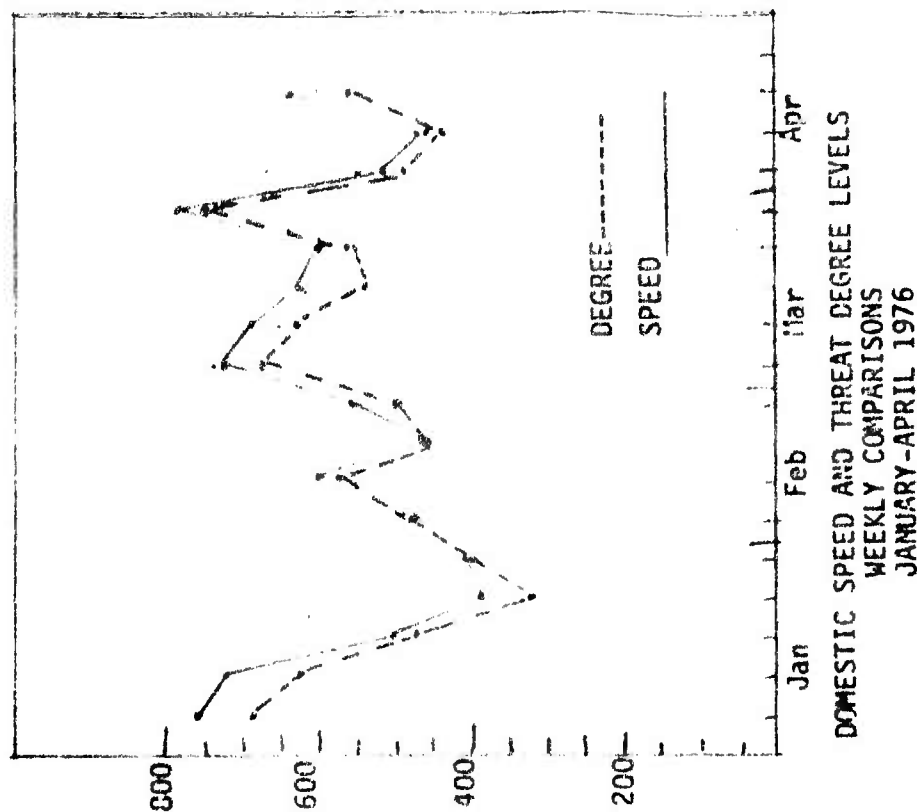


Figure 9

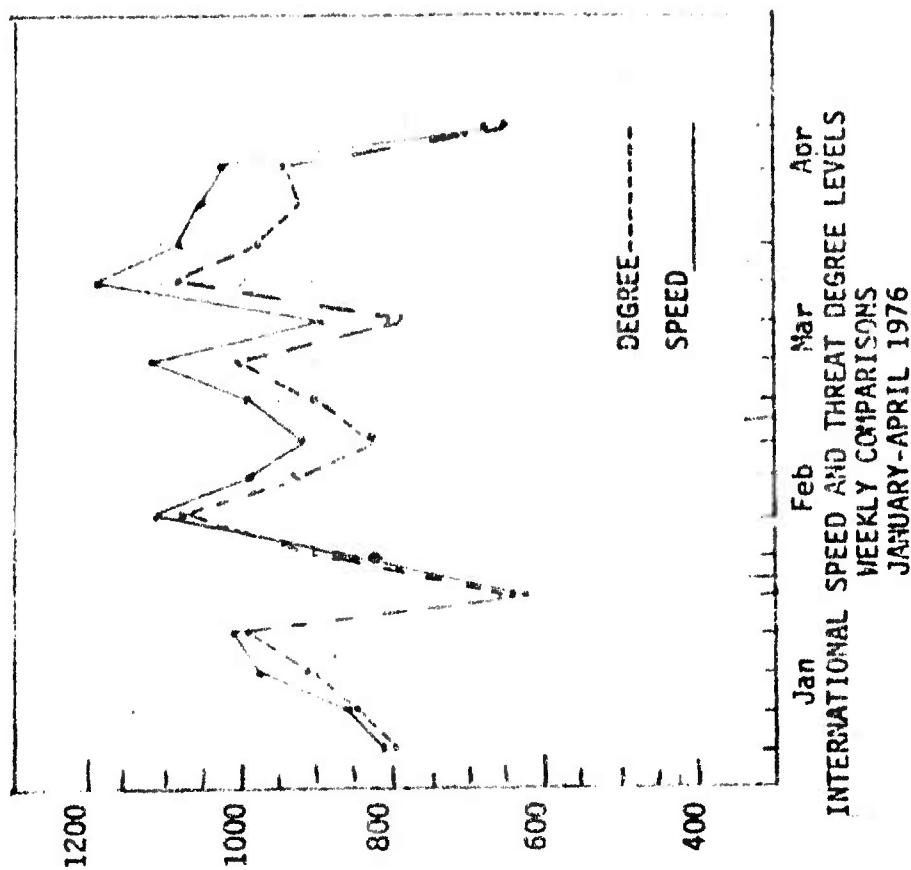
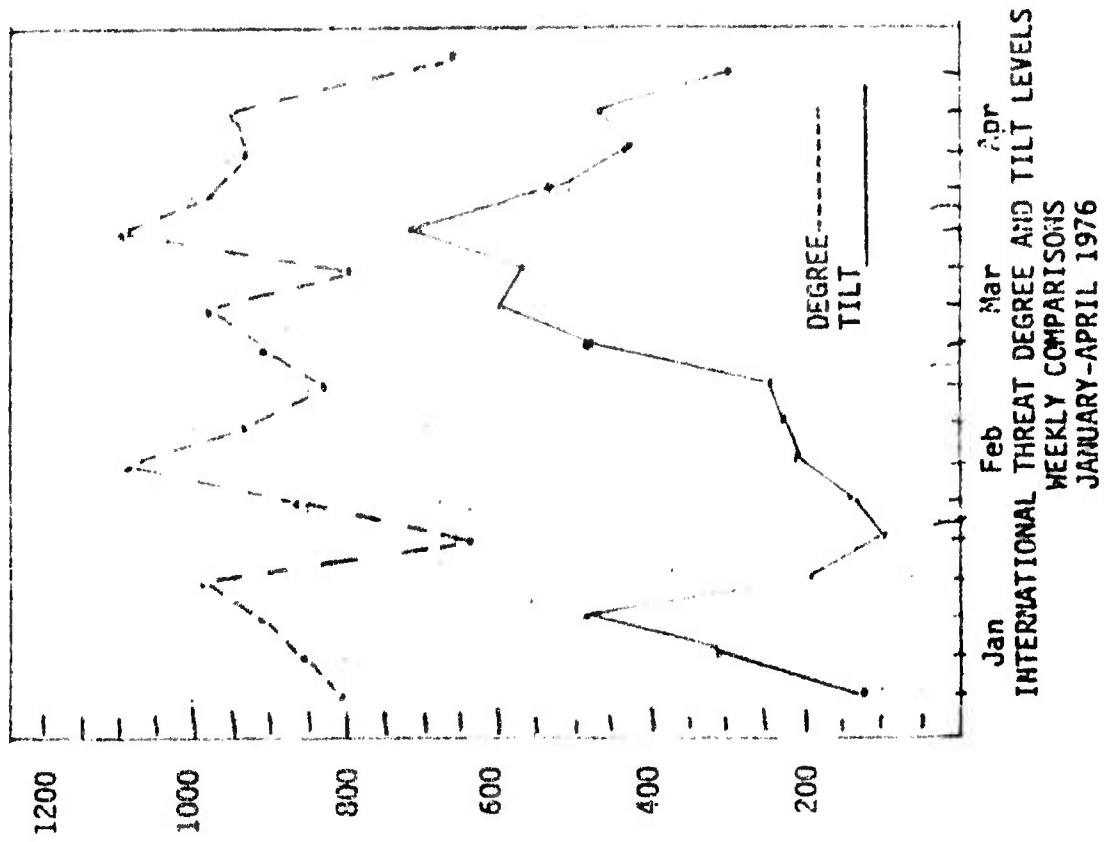
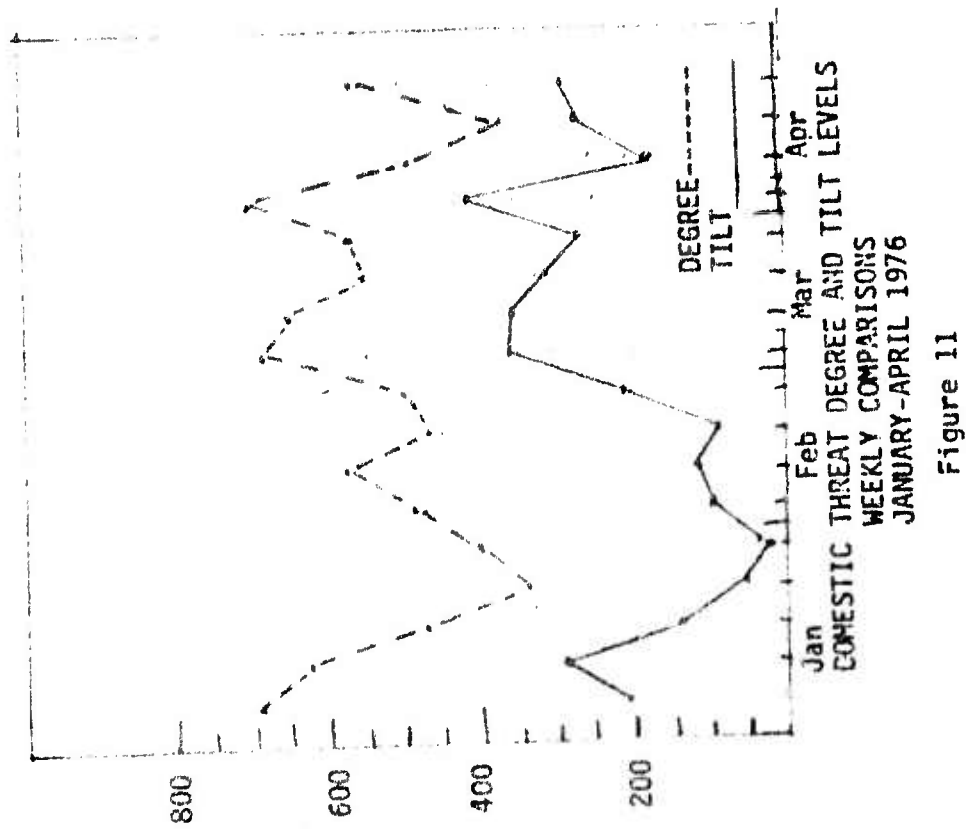


Figure 10



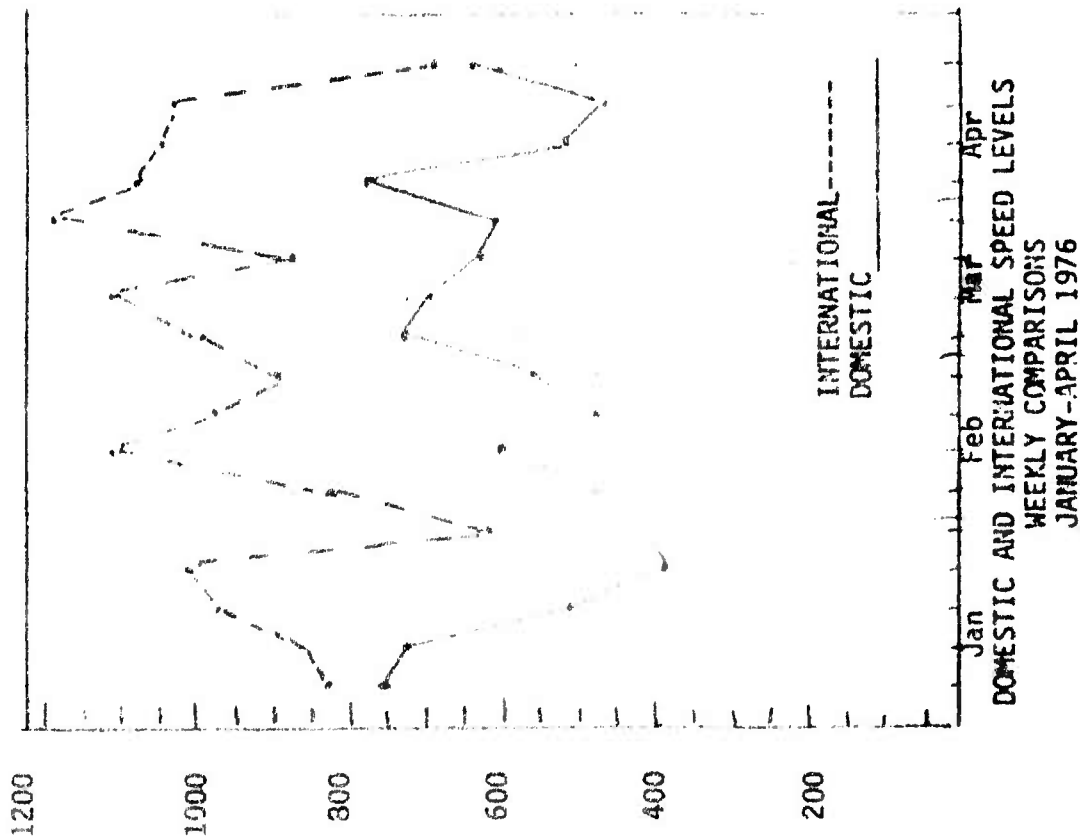


Figure 13

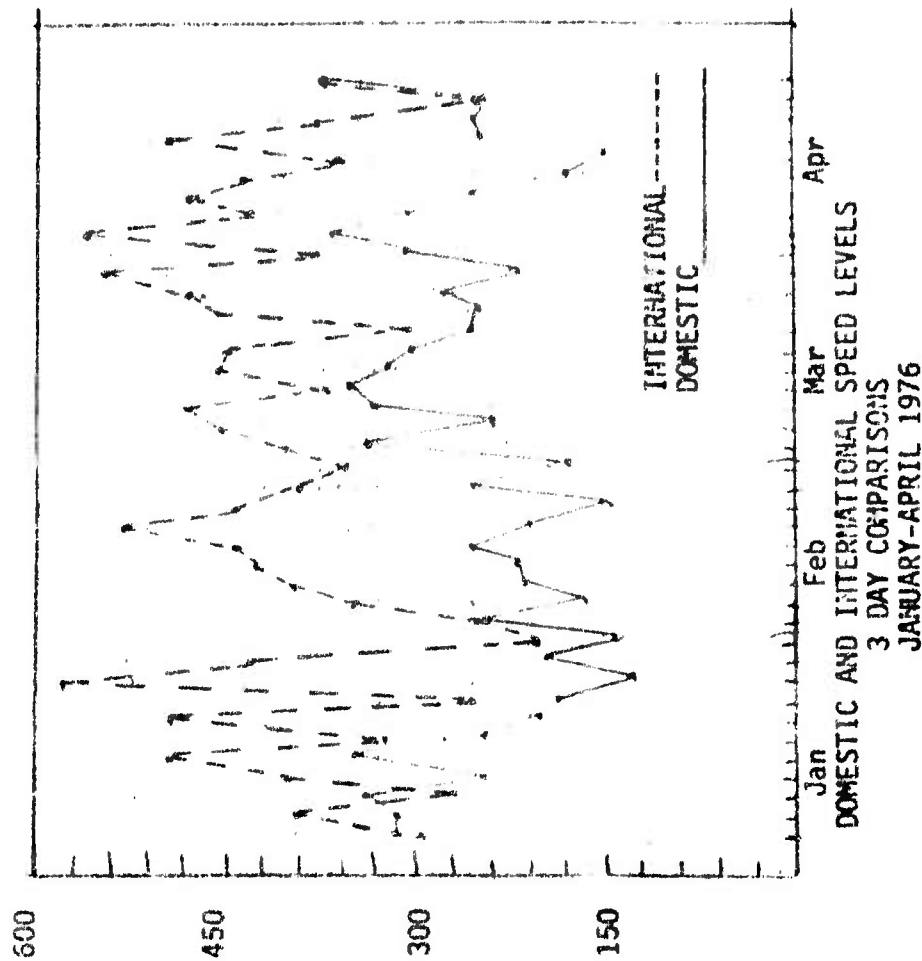


Figure 14